The Owaisi Tradition

The White Felt Cap of Uways Al-Qarani



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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الصلوة و السلام عليك يا رسول الله

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An Introduction

A Small introduction to the Owaisi Tradition in Sufism and one account of its type. If you find any errors, then please be kind enough to report them to the site for immediate amendments, Jazakumullah Khayran.

An Introduction in to the Owaisi Sufi Tradition

It is often misunderstood by some that *al-Owaisi* refers to the Descendants of Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه). They might think that, in the manner by which, the Children of the *Quraysh* are referred to as *al-Qurayshi*, the Children of Banu Hashim are referred to as al-Hashmi, or those whose forefathers tree of ancestry includes after various means a link to Sayyiduna 'Umar al-Faruq (رضي الله عنه) are referred to as al-Faruqi. Maybe, in the same manner, the respected men of al-Owaisi tradition are connected by descent through various means to Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه).

Rather, as a matter of fact, Sayyid al-Tabi'in Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه) spent his entire life in worship of the Almighty. He did not marry, nor did he have any children. He spent his entire life abstinent from the world and concealed, and made a covenant with the Almighty that he remains concealed even on the Day of Judgement. Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه) received the honour of accepting of Islam by no means of propagation, nor was any needed effort executed in inviting him in to the circle of Islam.

When the Sun of Islam arose in its gull glory and its rays illuminated Yemen, then Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه) came forward, without any need of propagation or without anyone's effort, he acknowledged the religion of Islam as the true faith and his heart gave witness that His Excellency was the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) and He was, without any doubt or uncertainty, the True Guide. Not only did he become a believer in His Excellency (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم), but also became His true devotee. In other words, the light of faith entered his heart directly and the flame of devotion of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) lit by itself.

The knowledge of this matter is known only, after Allah Almighty, by His Excellency (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم). This is why he would most often turn his blessed chest towards Yemen, infront of His Honourable Companions and declare:

إني لأجد نفس الرحمن من قبل اليمن

Verily, I find the fragrant breeze of the Most Compassionate from the direction of Yemen.

The foundation of the Owaisi tradition was, thence, placed by Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه). In obedience to his example, the Sufi have termed the idiom al-Owaisi for one who receives sainthood (*Wilayah*) without the means of a Spiritual Guide and without the guidance and prompting of a Spiritual Guide.

Khawajah Muhammad Parsa wrote on this in his epistle al-Qudsiyya. The Scholars and the Masha'ikh have offered the following notions in regards to this matter.

Shaykh al-Ghawthi mentions the account of Shaykh Farid al-Din al-'Attar in his work *Gulzar Abrar* with the following transmission:

> Some saints of Allah are referred to as al-Owaisi, they are, perceptibly, not in need a Spiritual Guide, because the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) gives them guidance without the means of a Spiritual Guide. This is in the same manner by which we find Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه) receiving guidance without any means.

Shah Waly Allah al-Dihlawi provides an explanation for the Owaisiyya attribution in his *Him'at* as follows:

> The explanation of the Owaisiyya attribution is thus; a soul (*Nafs*) is one that speaks (*Natiqah*), which is equivalent to a mirror. It reflects man's spiritual qualities, and every quality and every state from his physical states is predisposed by *al-Qudrah*; the predisposition which is connected to his physical states and the predisposition which is connected to his spiritual qualities, the two are completely antagonistic and different. One quality of the spiritual qualities is that the travellers of the path, when they leave the world of humans and reach the heights of kingdom and leave all the lowly and impure acts completely, then in this state one becomes completely absorbed (*Fana*) in these qualities. Thus, the state of the travellers become like such a musk that it is absorbed by all the air, and because of this, it has become such widespread that even if you enter it in to the air or water, it will in no way be submerged.

The Owaisi Tradition is attributed to the devotee of the Medinian Messenger, the blessed Yemenite, Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه). In the idioms of al-Tasawwuf, the Owaisi attribution is attributed to the disciple of abstinence without visible meeting, and the one establishing the attribution visits via a dream or in a state of meditation. Other than this, the following statements have also been made to describe Owaisi Tradition:

1. One who reaches the station of sainthood by compliance and obedience to His Excellency (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم).
2. One who received the bounty of Sayyiduna Khidar (عليه السلام).
3. One who received such guidance from a Perfect Saint (*al-Kamil*), that he advanced to Sainthood soaring past stations that are in-between.
4. One who has made intent (*Irada*) with one of the Masha'ikh of the Owaisi Tradition.

The Sultan of the devotees, the respected Khawajah 'Abd al-Khaliq performed meditation and was visited by Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه). He honoured him by performing the Pledge of Allegiance with him on his blessed hand, thereby colouring him in his colour.

In the same manner, the Sultan of the abstinent, Khawajah Muhkam al-Din al-Sayrani made intent (Irada) with the Sultan of the devotees Khawajah 'Abd al-Khaliq and was also received

by the bounty of Sayyiduna Khidar (عليه السلام). Moreover, the attention he gave throughout his life in obedience to the Sunnah and giving guidance by it, he continued to receive, by this connection, guidance and direction from His Excellency, Most Honourable (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم).

The Owaisi Tradition is based upon certain principles, most important of which include: Consciousness and Breathing, Seclusion and Association.

Consciousness and Breathing: This idiom is also set in the Naqshbandi Tradition. It is to save oneself from the occurrence of a single breath in negligence of the remembrance of Allah. It means, if one is to breathe then one must remember Allah in that breath, and one must not breathe except while in His presence.

Seclusion and Association: It is to remain in association with the creation only in the exterior form, while the interior one is secluded from all and afar. It means, one is with all in appearance but in reality is with no one. One could say -

کہ دست بکار دل بہ یار

The heart is empty-handed without the friend

Shah Jalal al-Din Muhammad al-Ja'fari al-Owaisi mentions the following Hadith in his book Gulzar Jalali:

خالطوا الناس باهدانكم و ذابلواهم بقلوبكم

Mix among the people with your bodies, while remain separate with your hearts

Some people claim that the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, servants of al-Mustafa (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) and believers in the Saints of Allah, are Polytheists and Innovators. Also, they seem to reject the Miracles of al-Mustafa (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) by terming those particular *Ahadith* as weak (*Da'if*).

In the same way, they also deny the existence of Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه) and term it a conceptual or theoretical event. If they deny the existence of Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه), then how could the Owaisi Tradition remain to exist? For the sake of these folk I will not mention a centuries-old tale rather one of recent times by the great intellectual, the contemplator, and well-known bureaucrat Qudratullah Shihab from his famous work Shihab Nama, Page 1180-1186.

It is being related here to demonstrate how the company of Sayyiduna Owais al-Qarani (رضي الله عنه), His Excellency Sayyiduna Muhammad al-Mustafa (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم), His Ahl al-Bayt, His Sahaba Kiram (رضي الله عنهم), and His Special Personalities (*Awliya Allah*) still exists, and they hear the invocations of the people and answer them.

For the deniers of the Miracles of Saints after their passing away, this one event should be enough to open their eyes, as one cannot term it as weak (*Da'if*). This is because Shihab Sahib has distributed this book well in 1999, when it was in the twentieth edition, which stands as a proof of the book's acceptance.

It is written:

> Once I went to a very far location, where there was an old crumbling *Masjid*. I went to the *Masjid* to perform the Friday Prayers, a semi-literate *Mulla* was giving a limitlessly lengthy sermon. His sermon passed filled with pretty weird and odd tales, at times I felt like bursting out in laughter and at times I was just amazed but he did manage to relate one such tale that struck a chord directly to my heart.
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> The story was of the love and respect between a father and daughter. The father was the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) and the daughter was Sayyida Fatima al-Zahra (رضي الله عنها). The *Mulla* was explaining how the blessed companions would approach Sayyid Fatima al-Zahra (رضي الله عنها) to put forward their requests, knowing that it would be accepted, if their requests were ever rejected at first by the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم). The extent of love and respect the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) had in his heart for his daughter Sayyida Fatima al-Zahra (رضي الله عنها) was such that he would happily agree to her requests.
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> My heart became so overwhelmed with the urge to accept this narrative that, after the Friday Prayers, I remained in that Old Masjid and began to continuously read Supererogatory Prayers (*Nawafil*). I read some of these prayers with the intention of receiving the blessed spirit of Sayyida Fatima al-Zahra (رضي الله عنها) with their reward (*Isal al-Thawab*). I held myself in complete humbleness and prayed:
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> "Oh Allah! I do not know if this tale is true or false, but my heart gives witness that your final Messenger (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) had an even greater share of love and respect in his heart for his daughter, the Lady of Heaven (رضي الله عنها). For this reason, I beseech Allah, the Almighty, that he give leave to the pure spirit of Sayyida Fatima (رضي الله عنها) that she put forward a request of mine, to the court of her respected Father (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم). My request is this, I am a searcher for the path of Allah, I do not have the stamina for the established general paths. If the Owaisi Tradition is infact a reality and not just legend, then by the leave of Allah grant me success and composition in benefiting from it."
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> I did not mention this event to anyone, at home or outside of the home. Six to seven weeks passed, and I forgot about this whole episode. Then, suddenly, I received a letter from a Sister-in-law of mine from afar. She had accepted Islam and was a lady of great adherence and regular prayer and fasting.

She wrote:

“The other night, I had the good fortune to see her Excellency, Fatima (رضي الله عنها), daughter of the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) in my dream. She talked to me most graciously and said: “Tell your brother-in-law, Qudratullah Shihab, that I have submitted his request to my exalted father (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم), who has very kindly accepted it.”

Reading this letter, my conciseness and emotions became overwhelmed with happiness and amazement. I felt as though my feet were flying off the ground, and I was in the air. This thought of my mentioning at a majestic event of conversation between the blessed Father (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) and blessed Daughter, (رضي الله عنها) would give me Goosebumps all over my body. What a magnificent father, and what a magnificent Daughter (رضي الله عنها)! Two to three days, I just sat there like a statue, in my room, thinking about my mentioning being in no greater gathering than this.

For quite a while after this, I had begun to receive continual visits in my dreams by various spiritual personalities, those I did not recognise nor could I understand what they were saying, and nor did my heart sob with them. Then, in one dream, I saw an extremely heart warming man, of great beauty and dressed in an *Ihram* (Plain sheet), circumambulating the *Ka’ba* in a world of great tranquillity and spiritual temulance. My heart uncontrollably fell towards his feet, and he too smiled and came towards me. He sat me with him outside of the place of *Tawaf*, towards *al-Hatim*, and told me:

“My name is Bakhtiyar al-Kaki, you are not a man of that path, but we have received an acceptance for from a higher office. We are all in submission towards such an order.”

Sayyiduna Bakhtiyar al-Kaki placed a dish before us which contained some kind of food and drink. He suddenly asked: “Do you want this life or the other life?” My pandiculation in the state of sleep misguided me in to thinking that the answer to this question means the immediate acceptance of death. Meaning, do you want the life of this world or the life of the afterlife? I still desired to be alive, and so I became prey to this misleading originating from my heart: “Sir, I want some of this life and some of that life”.

As soon as I said this, a black dog appeared running towards my direction. It came and directly put his head in to the dish before me.

The great Qutb [al-Kaki] smiled and said: “What a shame, this free gift is not in your destiny, your lustful side (*Nafs*) has dominance over you, and you will need to strife (*Mujahada*) against it”. After this event, no dream occurred for some months, nor

did any such event bechance. The shades of the towers of deprivation began to fall long. I felt that, after obtaining everything, I had lost everything. I repeatedly felt like committing suicide, and once I even arranged to drown myself. I sat at the side of a bridge, deciding to jump in to the river but was overwhelmed by thoughts and sat for hours. Later, I went home in peace and safety.

In this world of deprivation and dysphoria, three hundred and three months had passed, which felt like three hundred years on my internal state (*Wujud Batini*). After this, the blessed day of 9th June broke daylight. This day is from among the two or three most important days of my life. That day, I received my first letter from "Ninety", I only know the sender by this code name, I have never met him, nor have I ever known him. Our literary exchange, via the post office box, has only been once. The first letter was received through the post office box, the post center stamp displayed:

"June 9th Jammu Market, 9:30 A.M."

The postman delivered this letter at 12:30 P.M. that afternoon. The city postal service did not possess such arrangements that letters be posted on the same day at 12:30 P.M.

Composed on thirteen pages, it exposed all my inner and outer faults, weaknesses, mistakes and errors in such depth and clarity, some of which were known to only Allah and me, and some even I knew very little about. The letter was written in such eloquence and delicate composition that I had to repeatedly rely upon a dictionary. Half the letter was based upon this explanation, and the latter half was full of guidelines and future agenda of deeds. At the end, the writer's name was simply noted as: Ninety year old young *Faqir.*

One such guideline was to answer a few questions asked within the letter in English and put it in a place in my cupboard, I acted upon this immediately. I checked moments later to find my letter disappeared. I received a response that night, which I found under my pillow. At the end, instead of Ninety year old young *Faqir*, it was written: Ninety.

This incident put my entire mind and body in to a severe state and fear. For a while, I became overwhelmed by semi-consciousness. Taking pity on my restless state, Ninety also made my younger brother Habibullah Shihab a companion of mine. The companionship of Habib became a solace for me during my sleep.

For around twenty years, this odd arrangement of writing between us remained daily. Sometimes our contact via writing would even reach up to three or four times. Habib became our post office, our letter box was sometimes the cupboard,

sometimes a book and sometimes letters by the writing of Ninety would fall upon me like leaf off a tree.

I was ordered to spoil to every letter written by Ninety. However, I did have some permission to preserve the rules and guidelines given to me in my own writing. This was in cautiousness to avoid the letter coming in to the wrongs hands, the letter might be viewed perverse or in a lowly light. I adhered to this rule all but once.

One day, my desirous self intended to preserve one hand written letter by my nameless one and unseen one, on the path of Khidar (عليه السلام), so that I receive blessings by it. It was only such a thought, when suddenly the punishment descended upon me. It was night time, the electric bulbs were moving from side to side, while I see a paper slowly bump against the bulb and fall upon my lap. It was written on there that the projectment of the just law would claim immediate punishment. The summary of the punishment was that after a few moments, it flower and tie both my hands and feet for half an hour with two live snakes. Hearing this fearful punishment, I began to cry profusely. I quickly resorted to repentance for my intentions, and wrote the following couplet by the poet Ghalib and placed it in my cupboard:

I require a limit in chastisement, on grounds of penalty

For finally, I am a Sinner, a Disbeliever I am not

While in waiting, suddenly, a response from Ninety came floating in to my hand from the side of one of the electric bulbs. It was written in it: "Dear me, you became terrified at the thought of two snakes. You are a coward, okay, I have forgiven you. But forget this not that in your grave, other than the general insects of the land, there will live snakes. Then there will be no chance of resorting to repentance, nor will any repentance be accepted, and oh negligent one! What do you know of how many fearful voices attack against your body and inner self, night and day? And, on the time coming, how many such earthly creatures are restlessly waiting for you, alas, if only you people knew. Ninety"

One day, I asked my guide: "Who are you? Where are you? What do you do? And at what stage of spirituality are you stationed?"

I received the following reply: "The first three questions are useless. You will never receive a reply to them, and what remains is the question about the spiritual stage. This lengthy path has many passes, and many mile stones to surpass. The knowledge of the stage or station, no one has. Everyone is on this road, some ahead, and some behind. The Station has only been given to one man, and no one after Him has received any Station.

The name of that man is Sayyiduna Muhammad Mustafa [who is the best all men] (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم). You mention his name a plenty, but have you tried to ever follow his footsteps? If you had done so, then you would not be leaning affixed to this unfinished wall, a wall that even flies leave."

This was my Owaisi Tradition, that this pauper was fortunate enough to be able to receive guidance and take his unsteady steps on the path of self purification (Suluk).

You have read it –

This is a miracle of the present generation and proof of the reality of the Owaisi tradition. You may have noticed while reading that Shihad Sahib implored Sayyida Fatima (رضي الله عنها) to ask the Peerless Patron on the reality of the Owaisi tradition, and whether it was just a dream.

He received his response, however notice how he implored Sayyida Fatima (رضي الله عنها), how his Excellency (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) received the request, he Excellency (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم) accepting the request and how Sayyida Fatima (رضي الله عنها) contacted a familiar Muslim Lady to Shihab Sahib from across the world. Does this not prove that Allah's chosen and beloved persons listen and respond to their disciples? Rather, they also bless them with their bounty and generosity.

The gist of this study is thus: The name given to the direct contact or receipt of bounty from his Excellency (صلى الله عليه و اله و سلم), Sayyiduna Khidar (عليه السلام), or pious men of the shrines, is recognised as Owaisi. The disciples of this Owaisi tradition, "Silsila Owaisiyya" are also known as Owaisi.

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